

Appl. No. 10/030,065  
Amdt. dated 06/3/2004  
Reply to Office Action of 3/3/2004

### **REMARKS/ARGUMENTS**

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Final Office Action dated March 3, 2004. By way of this amendment, claims 15 and 24 have been amended. Claims 22, 23, and 27-32 have been canceled. Claims 15-21, 24-26, and 33-37 are currently pending in the application. Reconsideration of the rejections is requested. Allowance of claims 15-21, 24-26, and 33-37 at an early date is solicited.

Claim 15 has been amended to recite limitations previously recited in claim 23. More specifically, claim 15 now recites the step of oxidizing the core (2) after the nitriding treatment. The Examiner has indicated that this is allowable subject matter, thus, it is believed that claim 15 is allowable. Accordingly, the rejection should be withdrawn.

Claims 16 - 21 depend from independent claim 15 and are thus believed to be allowable for the reasons stated above.

Claim 24 has been amended to recite limitations previously recited in claims 28 and 32. More specifically, claim 24 has been amended to recite an edge layer (23, 24) that includes a connecting layer (23) and a diffusion layer (24), wherein the connecting layer (23) has a thickness of 8 $\mu$ m - 12 $\mu$ m and the diffusion layer (24) has a thickness of 100 $\mu$ m to 200 $\mu$ m. The Examiner has indicated that this is allowable subject matter, thus, it is believed that claim 24 is allowable. Accordingly, the rejection should be withdrawn.

Claims 25, 26, and 33-37 depend from independent claim 24 and are thus believed to be allowable for the reasons stated above.

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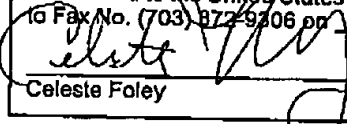
In view of the above, it is submitted that the claims are in condition for allowance.  
Reconsideration of the rejections is requested. Allowance of claims 15-21, 24-26, and 33-37 at an early date is solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



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 Celeste Foley	June 3, 2004